

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Factors Related to Quality User Education Programmes

This section presents the system model, which describes possible factors related to quality user education programmes and the outcome of such programmes. The model indicates five factors which help promote quality user education programmes and the following sub-sections will describe the factors. These factors are considered in the design of the questionnaire to obtain the relevant information.

3.1.1 Assistance of Human Resources

The success of school library programmes is related to the following human resources situations:

- i. Obtaining the services of a manager who plans, organizes, coordinates, reports, and plan budgets for user education programmes;
- ii. Obtaining supportive staff who can be trained according to the programmes' objectives (teachers, teacher librarian and other staff);
- iii. Having staff, students and parents who are aware of the need for user education programmes;
- iv. Having pro-active management who makes the necessary arrangements and get assistants from external and internal sources.

- v. The establishment of an evaluation committee, which evaluates the programme continuously and informs of feedback.

The quality user education programme includes regular on-going planning that results in the development of policies, procedures, long-term plans, and operational tasks that ensure a high level of service to the students, teachers, and the staff.

3.1.2 Financial Assistance

Adequate financial backing would also ensure that resources needed for user education programmes can be used effectively. Conditions of financial backing includes:

- i. Receiving an annual funding sufficient to facilitate student academic achievement based on the standards set by the Ministry of Education and Provincial Department of Education.
- ii. Receiving additional funding to support special programmes assigned to the school from non-governmental organization, parent-teacher association and well wishers.

3.1.3 Conducive Infrastructure for the Programmes

The objectives of the user education programmes should be to promote life long learning among students and give relevant information within the school. Therefore, the school management should ensure that a conducive infrastructure is in place to assist user education programmes. The resource center should be sufficiently equipped, have basic

facilities (electricity, water, and telephone), sufficiently spaced, and equipment with office facilities needed by student and programme organizers.

3.1.4 Supportive Resources and Facilities

To support the skills of locating, retrieving and assimilating information, the user education programmes need to be supported by a mixed and balanced collection of resources.

- i. The resource center offers a balanced mix of print, multimedia, and electronic resources.
- ii. The school develops and maintains a collection based on curriculum and user needs, proportionate to student population and special programmes; and
- iii. The school library offers access to resources via worldwide networks.

Resources available in and/or accessible through the school library provide students the opportunities for reading and life-long learning, support the curriculum, and meet most students' needs and interests. Library materials must be cataloged, inventoried, and made available for use. These materials should be current and in good state, selected according to the schools' selection policies, reflect an appropriate balance among print as well as electronic resources. In addition, a recognized library programme's collection should provide some materials that reflect the unique needs of the specific school population. Outdated and worn out materials should be regularly discarded according to the

guidelines generally accepted by the education authority. Provisions should be made for access to information resources and technology.

The successful library user education programme is also related to these situations:

- i. The school library provides a balanced collection of books, software, and electronic resources, which can support the user education programmes.
- ii. The school participate in statewide information sharing projects;
- iii. The school library provides periodicals for students and staff for learning, general knowledge and teaching needs; and
- iv. The school provides sufficient computers, software, Internet and CD-ROM facilities for the students.

Delivery of a recognized school library user education programme is influenced by a barrier-free learning environment that ensures availability of a centralised collection of information resources and access to electronic information that includes a variety of types of data. The recognized school library is an inviting, accessible, and stimulating place for individuals and small groups, for research, browsing, listening, viewing, and reading.

3.1.5 Supportive Curriculum

The user education programmes should be integrated with the schools curriculum and provide the following:

- i. Teaching teachers and students on how to locate and use information;
- ii. Instructions and information use through problem-solving process related to the curriculum learning objectives;

- iii. Collaborative planning and teaching between teacher librarians and teachers;
- iv. Planning lesson that move students to be active and independent learners;
- v. Providing education, training, and guidance to students and staff in the use of information technology and electronic resources;
- vi. The production of appropriate teaching aids, including multimedia presentations; and,
- vii. Working with students individually and in groups.

The library user education programmes should stimulate self learning when both process and contents are integrated, and learners are involved in a continuous process of problem-solving, assessment and assimilation of information in order to promote information literacy and life-long learning.

All the above factors are presented in a systems model user education programme (**Figure3.1**).

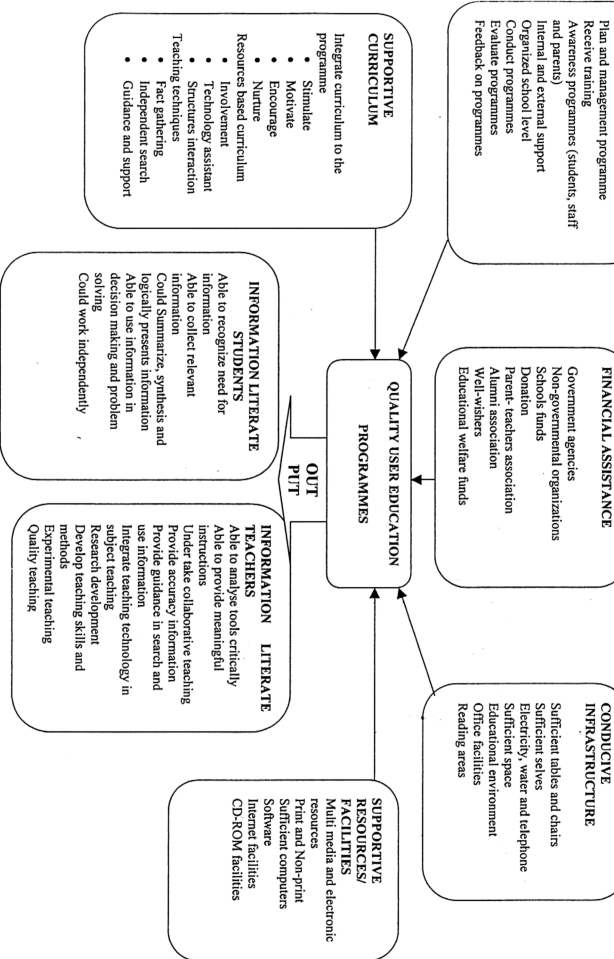


FIGURE 3.1 SYSTEM MODEL INDICATING FACTORS RELATED TO QUALITY USER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The following sections cover these sub-sections: a) research design; b) the research instruments; c) population sample; d) data collection procedures; and e) analyses of the data.

3.2. Research design

This study employs the survey method that elicits demographic information about respondents and their attitudes concerning user education programmes in school libraries.

The survey method is defined as “the research strategy where one collects data from all or part of a population to assess the relative incidence, distribution, and interactions of naturally occurring variables” (Kidder and Judd, 1986). The survey method allows generalizations to be made about the characteristics, opinions, beliefs, attitudes, and so on, of the entire population being studied. This research method involves the following stages.

- 1) Selecting the sample schools involved in the study.
- 2) Obtaining support and consent from the Ministry of Education and the western provincial Department of Education in Sri Lanka;
- 3) Distributing the questionnaire to principals, teacher librarians, teachers and selected students in the sample schools; and
- 4) Collecting and analysing the data collected.

3.3. The Research Instrument

This study uses the questionnaire as the research instrument. The researcher uses two questionnaires as the data collection instrument (see Appendix B). The principals, teacher librarians and teachers answer the first questionnaire. The students fill in the second

questionnaire. All respondents answer the Sinhala version of the questionnaires because the Sinhala language is the medium of instruction in Sri Lanka.

The first questionnaire is divided into five parts. The first part consists thirteen items to ascertain the information skill competencies of the principals, teacher librarians and teachers and their attitude toward user education programmes. The respondents respond to the items using a five point Likert-type scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Fairly agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree, indicating the strength of agreement to the statement posed.

Section B focuses on the problems of implementing the user education programmes within the schools. The items under this section solicits opinion about the adequacy of library materials, equipment, teaching-learning environment of the information skills programmes, planning of the user education programmes, support from the staff, allocation of funds, time allocation for the user education programmes, the relationship between teaching-learning environment and the formal curriculum, current state of the information skills and the available resources to support such programmes. The researcher hopes to obtain data about implementation problems and how principals, teacher librarians and teachers are tackling the problems. The respondents are asked to respond to statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Very Serious, Serious, Fairly Serious, Not Serious and Not Serious at all.

Section C focuses on obtaining information on user education programmes currently used in the sampled schools. The section focuses on obtaining data on instructional programmes, the use of the library catalogue, use of library resources, use behavior, reading guidance programmes, special projects, field research, mass media, computer and new technology based user education programmes. The researcher hopes to get information about, the type of user education programmes functioning in Sri Lankan schools currently.

Section D aims to identify the user education methods currently used in the sample schools. The section focuses on the user education methods used and respondents are asked to respond to the items using Likert scales ranging from Often use, Some time use and Do not use at all. This section provides information on the group, individual instruction methods used, self-instruction materials as well as programme instructions, guided tours, practical exercises, team teaching, demonstration, lectures, multimedia teaching aids, integrated teaching methods, community instructions, and individual information skills instruction.

Section E focuses on user's opinion about improvements to the user education programmes. Respondents are asked to respond to the items using a scale of 1-5, ranging from "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Fairly agree", "Agree" and "Strongly agree." The researcher asked the respondents about integrated user education programmes, supervision and instructions from education authority, technology literacy programmes, equipments of new technology, adequacies on money allocated for the library

programmes, compulsory state of the information skills for students, awareness programmes for the parents, library base learning environment and evaluation of the user education programmes at national as well as school's level.

Students fill in the second questionnaire. Two groups of students from ordinary level and advanced level classes form the respondents. This instrument focuses on ascertaining the level of students' information skills competencies. The questionnaire is divided into six parts. The first part provides the background information of the students. The second part of the questionnaire lists five items on the use of the library and students are asked to respond to the items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree. This part of the questionnaire provides information about the borrowing behavior of the materials held in the school library, the use of the other resources of the library, use of the library catalogue and interaction between teacher librarian and students when using the library.

The third section lists six statements on the state of school library resources. Students are asked to provide their opinion on the relevance of material in their library, facilities provided, arrangement of the resources, how requests for the necessary materials are made and encouragement in the use of the library. The forth section focuses on the level of information skills of students within the sampled schools. Students are asked to respond to the items using a five point Likert-scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. This section considers the methods used to organize and improve their information skills and the medium used to improve such skills.

The fifth section provide information on the use of computers and new technology. Students are asked their opinions about their skills in using the computers, the Internet, CD-ROM facilities, the usefulness of the searching skills, the relationship between computer skills and formal school curriculum, and the encouragement they obtained from teachers and teacher librarians.

Finally, the sixth section focuses on the level of information literacy of students. Students are asked about the allocation of time for library use in schools, skills on using the library, and the organization of the information skills programmes at the national and school level.

A copy of the instrument in English language and Sinhala language respectively, with the covering letters are given in Appendices A and B.

3.4. Population Sample

The population for this study comprises secondary schools in the Western province of Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is made up nine (9) provinces and twenty-five (25) districts. The Western province comprises three districts, Gampaha, Kalutara and Colombo. The Ministry of Education in Sri Lanka has classified the schools into 1AB schools, 1C schools, Type 2 schools and type 3 schools. This study focuses on three kinds of schools: 1AB, 1C and type 2.

Appendix C provides the classification of schools by type and the total number of student population of secondary schools in the Western province.

The total number sampled for this study comprises fifty (50) schools, fifty (50) principals, fifty (50) teacher librarians, fifty (50) teachers and one hundred (100) students from schools of the Kalutara, Colombo and Gampaha districts. Many of the schools do not have a permanent appointment of teacher librarians. Therefore, library duties are carried out by a staff member in the schools. The person who performed the duty as the librarian in a specific school is included in the sample, when a permanent teacher librarian is not available.

The researcher chose the schools at random and the sample population was selected based on their knowledge, experience and involvement in the user education programmes. The principals, teacher librarians and teachers in schools had several years of experience in the education sector. Therefore, it is taken that the sample represents the school management, and teachers involved in user education programmes at the school levels. All respondents responded anonymously to the questionnaire.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

The study was conducted at the Colombo, Gampaha, and Kalutara districts in the Western province in Sri Lanka. The questionnaires were distributed to the sample in October 2001 and respondents were given a period of 30 days to complete the questionnaire. A covering letter also accompanied the questionnaires to briefly explain the purpose of the study and to stress the importance of each person's response. The

questionnaires were accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes. Follow-up postcards were sent to those who did not respond after four weeks. After one follow up mailing, a total of 200 questionnaires were completed and received in time for tabulation from 40 schools. Ten schools did not respond to the questionnaires. Analyses were based on 40 responses from the principals, 40 responses from the teacher librarians, 40 responses from the teachers, and 80 responses from the students.

3.6. Data Analysis

The collected data was fed into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 10.00. This study uses the descriptive method of analysing the data. The findings are presented under ten sub-headings based on the research questions. The first part describes the competencies of user education programmes among the principals, teacher librarians and teachers. The second part considers the current user education programmes available in schools as well as the user education methods used. The third part describes the implementation problems of the user education programmes. The next parts describe the use of the library and resources by students, the medium of information skills, use of computers by students, and the level of students' information literacy.

3.7. Summary

This chapter describes the method used to conduct this study. The study employs the survey research method and analyses are based on responses by 40 principals, 40 teacher librarians, 40 teachers and 80 students who returned questionnaires in October 2001.